

Ecstasy: Just the Facts



What is Ecstasy?

Ecstasy or MDMA (methylenedioxymethamphetamine) is a stimulant that combines the properties of methamphetamine or “speed” with mind-altering or hallucinogenic properties. Considered the most commonly used designer drug, Ecstasy is a close derivative of methamphetamine and can be described as a hallucinogenic stimulant. Designer drugs are illicit variations of other drugs. Because of many different recipes used to manufacture Ecstasy, deaths have been caused by some other substances inadvertently created during production, such as PMA (paramethamphetamine). Ecstasy was banned in 1985, and is currently classified as a Schedule 1 substance.

Where did Ecstasy come from?

Although first prepared as an appetite suppressant in 1914, Ecstasy was relatively ignored until the 1960’s when nonmedical use was first reported in the U.S. Until 1985, MDMA was used extensively by psychiatrists and psychologists to help persons with certain psychological and emotional difficulties.

Who uses Ecstasy?

In Texas, Ecstasy is used most frequently by teenagers, young adults, and others who attend night clubs and raves. It is found primarily at night clubs, bars, and all-night rave parties.

Raves are all-night dance parties that are held in settings such as vacant warehouses. They have fast-paced and high-volume music, offer a variety of high-tech entertainment, and often incorporate the use of drugs.

How is Ecstasy Used?

Known on the street as Adam, X-TC, Clarity, Essence, Stacy, Lover’s Speed, Eve, etc., Ecstasy is most often found in tablet, capsule, or powder form and is usually consumed orally; although, it can also be injected. Ecstasy is sometimes packaged in capsules or generic tablets to imitate prescription drugs with the average dose costing anywhere from \$7-\$30 per pill. Ecstasy can be combined with methadone, LSD, opiates such as heroin or Fentanyl, or strong anesthetics such as Ketamine.

Is Ecstasy an aphrodisiac?

Although rumors abound, there is no evidence that demonstrates that Ecstasy is an aphrodisiac.

What are Ecstasy’s emotional effects?

An Ecstasy high can last from six to 24 hours, with the average “trip” lasting only about three to four hours. At moderate doses, Ecstasy can cause euphoria, feelings of well-being, enhanced mental or emotional clarity, anxiety, and paranoia. Heavier doses can cause hallucinations, sensations of lightness and floating, depression, paranoid thinking, and violent, irrational behavior.

What are Ecstasy’s physical effects?

Physical reactions can include the following symptoms: loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, blurred vision, increased heart rate and blood pressure, muscle tension, faintness, chills, sweating, tremors, reduced appetite, insomnia, convulsions, and a loss of control over voluntary body

movements. Some reactions have been reported to persist from one to 14 days after taking Ecstasy. Individuals who are pregnant, have a heart condition, are epileptic, or have high blood pressure are at high risk of adverse reactions. In addition, users are at particular risk of heat exhaustion and dehydration with physical exertion, particularly when Ecstasy is taken in a dance-party setting. A number of deaths have occurred because users don't drink enough water and become overheated.

How long does Ecstasy stay in the body?

Ecstasy can be detected up to four days in the urine.

Are there long terms effects to Ecstasy use?

Current animal research shows that Ecstasy destroys serotonin-producing neurons in the brain, causing long-lasting depletion of brain serotonin levels. These areas in the brain regulate aggression, mood, sexual activity, sleep, and sensitivity to pain. Researchers aren't yet sure how much long lasting damage occurs from using Ecstasy chronically.

Is Ecstasy a legal substance?

No. Ecstasy is classified as a "Schedule 1" controlled substance along with other dangerous narcotics like heroin, cocaine, and LSD. Schedule 1 controlled substances are dangerous narcotics with a high potential for abuse and no acceptable medical use. They carry penalties for possession, delivery, and manufacturing of these drugs. Penalties can include fines as high as \$100,000 and up to 99 years or life in prison, depending on the amount seized.

Is Herbal Ecstasy a Safe, Natural Alternative?

No. Although not currently classified as a controlled substance, Herbal Ecstasy is a drug composed of ephedrine (ma huang) or pseudoephedrine and caffeine (koala nut), stimulants that closely simulate the effects of Ecstasy. Sold in tablet form, Herbal Ecstasy is known as Cloud 9, Herbal Bliss, Ritual Spirit, Herbal X, GWM, Rave Energy, Ultimate Xphoria, and X. There is no quality control over the manufacture of these products, and problems arise because the amounts of ephedrine and caffeine in the pills vary widely. Over 800 reports of adverse reactions such as high blood pressure, seizures, heart attacks, strokes, and death have been reported to federal authorities. Because of these reactions, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is considering placing restrictions on the drug.

Are adolescents at risk?

One major concern about Ecstasy is its widespread use among high school youths, college students, and young adults who frequent night clubs and all-night rave parties. Lured by the drug's availability and intoxicating effects, many youths are unaware of the dangers of Ecstasy and Herbal Ecstasy. In addition, when young people start using Ecstasy regularly, they often lose interest in school work affecting academic success as well. Chronic Ecstasy use can place students and young adults at risk of dropping out of school or college, loss of employment, and possible encounters with law enforcement.

How are people usually introduced to Ecstasy?

Many young people are introduced to Ecstasy on the night club or rave scene by their peers. People often try drugs like Ecstasy because their friends are using it, and they think that the drug is safe to use.

What can parents and communities do?

The good news is that children can be taught resist social pressures to try drugs. Parents can help by becoming informed about Ecstasy, and by talking to their children about drug use. TCADA researchers have found that participation in extracurricular activities, the expression of parental disapproval of using alcohol and drugs, and parental attendance at school events can help protect

against drug experimentation. Communities can help by decreasing the availability of drugs, promoting drug-free homes and environments, and by supporting drug use prevention programs.

Who should I contact if someone close to me has a problem with Ecstasy?

Contact the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse's toll-free hotline at (800) 832-9623 or your local Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse for referral assistance. You may also contact your family physician, hospital, or yellow pages for other intervention and treatment options.

For more information, contact the following sources:

- Your region's TCADA Prevention Resource Center. Dial toll-free (888) PRC-TEXX to be connected to the center nearest you.
- Your local Council on Drug and Alcohol Abuse,
- Your local public library, and
- Other sources can be found in the yellow and blue pages of your phone book under "Drug Abuse."

Access reliable information instantly from the Internet from the following sites:

- The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information's home page has information on marijuana and other substances of abuse. <<http://www.health.org>>
- The National Institute on Drug Abuse has national statistics and the latest research findings available. <<http://www.nida.nih.gov>>
- The Partnership for a Drug-Free America has a drug database to help parents identify specific drugs, their effects, and drug paraphernalia. <<http://www.drugfreeamerica.org>>



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